

S.B. No. 1053

[http://www.cga.ct.gov/asp/cgabillstatus/cgabillstatus.asp?selBillType=Bill&bill\\_num=SB01053&which\\_year=2015](http://www.cga.ct.gov/asp/cgabillstatus/cgabillstatus.asp?selBillType=Bill&bill_num=SB01053&which_year=2015)

(RAISED) EDUCATION, 'AN ACT PROHIBITING OUT-OF-SCHOOL SUSPENSIONS AND EXPULSIONS FOR STUDENTS IN PRESCHOOL AND GRADES KINDERGARTEN TO TWO', to prohibit out-of-school suspensions and expulsions for students enrolled in a preschool program or grades kindergarten to two, inclusive.

First, as an educator, I can appreciate the motivation behind SB No 1053 – protecting children from inappropriate or excessive punishment and keeping youngsters in school. However, by universally prohibiting suspensions and expulsions, this legislation ignores the changing demographics of current day early childhood education settings. For the last 20 years, your predecessors have spent enormous resources on preschool early identification programs, professional development and even full day kindergarten for the express purpose of creating a more diverse – and equitable – early childhood experience, particularly for those previously excluded because they were considered higher risk emotionally, socially or developmentally. In my opinion, your Bill will negatively impact this supportive climate that has taken years and great resources to develop. By now prohibiting school administrators from taking steps to temporarily remove those students who pose a danger to themselves or others (teachers, para professionals and students) due to their inappropriate behavior, you force them to limit a range of interventions that may be situationally appropriate.

Although school personnel (i.e. teachers, social workers, school psychologists, administrators) utilize many strategies and resources to work with students who exhibit inappropriate behavior, often times an out of school suspension is warranted. For example, you have passed legislation regarding bullying, weapons and threats, but you would now deprive Districts of the ability to protect students from such dangers from those who are now integrated into our mainstream programs but who cannot be suspended or expelled for such conduct. Examples of the types of behaviors in students in my urban District include:

- Bringing weapons to school (gun, knife)

- Inappropriately touching other students in a sexual manner
- Physical aggression- purposely targeting another student(s) and physically harming.

As administrators, teachers, social workers, school psychologists, we have the responsibility to protect all students. An out of school suspension provides the school/district the time needed to involve outside resources, if needed, such as DCF, police, etc. Ultimately, this Bill strips Boards of Education and Administrators of the ability to assure *all* parents, students, and employees that theirs is a safe and orderly school environment. Enacting S.B. No. 1053 may keep all students in school albeit inappropriate, unsafe behavior, however, compromise the safety and well-being of others.

Finally, if you move ahead with this legislation without providing sufficient financial support for its implementation, you will create a tremendous burden for Districts who will now require additional staff to provide a much higher level of supervision to a particular student, but without providing the financial support for the District to do so. In today's fiscal climate with limited education dollars and ever increasing demands and mandates, elementary principals are already overworked, few have assistants for administrative support, and even fewer have excess capacity in support staff available to assist. As an educator for the past 45 years, as a teacher, a principal, and now as Superintendent in Danbury, I see this proposed bill as dangerously limiting the tools available to educators who are faced with ever changing and more demanding school climates. I respectfully, ask you not to adopt this Bill.

Sal Pascarella, Superintendent  
Danbury Public Schools